Jesus and the Hasidim

by Shmuel Safrai

Jesus, who was quite close to the Hasidim and perhaps even involved with some of them, does not reflect Galilean boorishness or ignorance, but rather the dynamism and ongoing creativity of Jewish life in Galilee.

Josephus relates that there were three schools of thought among the people of Israel: Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes.[1] The Dead Sea sect likewise divided Israel into these three groups.[2] Rabbinic literature, however, mentions only Pharisees and Sadducees, referring obliquely at best to the existence of the Essenes.[3]

Jesus was closer to the world of the Pharisees than to that of the Sadducees or Essenes. He certainly did not share beliefs, religious outlook or social views with the Sadducees, and he would have had little in common with the isolationist views of the Essenes and their overt hostility toward anyone who did not accept their stringent views on ritual purity. Even if one accepts the premises of certain modern scholars regarding similarities between various sayings in the Synoptic Gospels and the literature of the Dead Sea sect, there is an enormous distance between Jesus and the Essenes. Jesus made this clear with his statement that the "sons of this world" are superior to the "sons of light" (Lk. 16:8).

Jesus and the Pharisees

Jesus' education and understanding of Torah was in agreement with the Pharisees' norms, based on both the Written and Oral Torah (Lk. 2:41-47). He even taught his disciples and followers: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses, so be careful to observe everything they tell you" (Mt. 23:2-3). The expression "seat of Moses" is also found in midrashic literature[4] and such seats have actually been found in ancient synagogues.[5] Jesus, however, warned the people not to behave like the Pharisees, because "they say, but do not do" (Mt. 23:3).

Jesus contributed the required annual half-shekel for the Temple, an innovation of the Pharisees or their predecessors. This innovation was accepted by neither Sadducees nor Essenes.[6] Jesus expressed his opinion that "the sons are free [of taxes]," that is, he and the people were exempt from this payment, but in the end he contributed for both himself and Peter. When the tax collectors asked Peter whether his master would give the half-shekel, Peter's reply was quite simple: "Yes."[7]

It is not known whether the Sadducees took part in synagogue services, nor whether the Essenes frequented the synagogue. Jesus, however, customarily went to the synagogue on the Sabbath, to read from the Torah and the Prophets and afterwards to teach from them.[8] All of this is in keeping with halachah and the practice described in tannaic literature.[9]

Jesus' method of public instruction was also in keeping with Pharisaic practice. He employed educational techniques such as the parable that were common only in Pharisaic teaching, and some of the basic themes in his teaching such as "kingdom of heaven" and "repentance," are found only in the teaching of the sages.[10] The prayers of Jesus and the motifs they contain are likewise similar to those of the sages.[11]

However, the world of the Pharisees was not monolithic. The many differences between

the house of Hillel and the house of Shammai pertained not only to specific details in halachah, but also to the basic underlying principles of halachah and religious and social thought. There is much that needs to be clarified regarding the place of Jesus and his teachings in relation to this Pharisaic world.

In the present study we shall examine the relationship of Jesus to the Hasidim, who, if they did not actually belong to the Pharisaic movement, were quite close to it. I have shown in previous studies that a Hasidic movement existed from the first century B.C.E. until the end of the tannaic period and beginning of the amoraic period when it was largely absorbed into the world of the sages.[12] The Hasidic world of ethics and religious values was similar to that of the Pharisees, and they learned Torah from them. Yet the Hasidim developed their own religious and social outlook on life. In many instances, the Hasidim had halachic traditions that were not in keeping with the accepted halachah of the time and in some cases even opposed to it. They also had customs and modes of behavior which were not always identical with those of the sages.

There is relatively little material available on the Hasidim since only a small amount of literature in rabbinic sources can be identified as Hasidic.[13] The main sources of information are Hasidic tales,[14] a small number of aggadic[15] and halachic teachings cited in their name, and anti-Hasidic stories found in rabbinic literature.[16] However, this material is sufficient to give us a basic understanding of their unique world and the differences in outlook and beliefs between them and the sages.

Judea and Galilee

All the references to Hasidim in the Second Temple period relate to Galilee.[17] However, the commonly accepted belief that Galilee was on a lower Jewish cultural level than Judea is without basis. There are a number of pejorative statements in rabbinic literature regarding Galileans, but similar statements are found regarding other regions such as the "South" (i.e., Judea), and Nehardea in Babylonia. Both the "South" and Nehardea were great Torah centers in spite of the occasional derogatory remark in rabbinic literature.[18]

Gedaliahu Alon was among the first to point out the true nature of cultural and religious life in Galilee in the first century C.E., and particularly in the period immediately after the destruction of the Temple.[19] Alon convincingly showed that there were sages in Galilee at this time, and that the Torah was taught there in public. In fact, according to Alon, the religious and moral behavior of the Galileans was in many respects on a higher level than that of the Judeans. The Galileans observed both the Torah and the teachings of the sages. The anti-Galilean statements mentioned above simply represent a degree of popular sentiment in Judea that sometimes looked down on Galilee.
However, even Alon accepted the Torah hierarchy established in Avot de-Rabbi Natan, Version A, Chpt. 27 (ed. Schechter, p. 85):[20] "At first they used to say grain in Judea, straw in Galilee and chaff in Peraea [Transjordan]. Later on they determined that there is no grain in Judea, but only straw, no straw in Galilee, but only chaff, and there is neither in Peraea." This saying refers to the cultural level of these various regions and would seem to indicate that Judea ranked first.

If this saying included Jerusalem in Judea, then certainly Judea did supersede Galilee and Transjordan because of the religious institutions in Jerusalem such as the Sanhedrin, and because of the many Torah scholars and scribes who lived or resided temporarily in Jerusalem, many of whom came from Galilee. If, however, Jerusalem is removed from this cultural equation — and Jerusalem did have its own independent cultural and religious existence — then it is beyond doubt that the cultural and religious level in

Galilee was higher than that in Judea.

The references in rabbinic literature to Galilean sages teaching in their academies (literally, houses of study) and in the open air in Galilee, exhorting the people to higher moral standards, stressing observance of Torah and seeking to strengthen ties to Jerusalem and the Temple, are many times more frequent than the references to such activities by their counterparts in Judea. Wherever life in Galilee is compared to that in Judea, whether explicitly or not, it is clear that Galilee came before Judea in terms of Torah, Jewish life and the entire complex of Jewish culture.[21]

Thus, the existence of the Hasidic movement in Galilee in the late Second Temple period and at the beginning of the tannaic period does not reflect a low level of Torah life in Galilee nor a minimal amount of Pharisaic influence there, but rather the existence of a fruitful, creative and committed Jewish existence both in the intellectual sphere and in the more practical aspects of life. Jesus, who was quite close to the Hasidim and perhaps even involved with some of them, does not therefore reflect Galilean boorishness or ignorance, but rather the dynamism and ongoing creativity of Jewish life in Galilee.

Father-Son Relationship

All the Gospels present Jesus' relationship to God as that of a son to his father. One finds in Jesus' teachings dozens of references to God in phrases such as "your father," "our father," "our father in heaven," "your father in heaven," "my father," "my father in heaven" or just "father."[22] These occur repeatedly, whether in direct conversation between Jesus and God or in Jesus' words to disciples or the public.[23]

These phrases are especially prevalent in Matthew, Luke and John, but somewhat rarer in Mark. Once, however, in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus even uses the phrase *abba* ("father" in both Hebrew and Aramaic): "And he said, '*Abba*, father'" (*abba ho pater*).[24] This concept also appears in the Epistle to the Romans 8:15: "For you received a spirit of adoption by which we cry, '*Abba*, father'" (*abba ho pater*). Similarly in the Epistle to the Galatians 4:6: "Because you are sons, God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts crying '*Abba*, father'" (*abba ho pater*).

Those scholars who claim that the dual usage of *abba* and father is not simply a later editorial clarification of Mark but rather Mark's original version are undoubtedly right, since this is the version that also appears in the Epistle to the Romans and in the Epistle to the Galatians.[25] The Hebrew might be reconstructed as "*abba ha-av*" (father, the [O!] father) or "*abba avi*" (father, my father). Then *abba* would be interpreted as a proper noun referring to God with "father" modifying it. The concept that Israel is the "son" of God is quite common in rabbinic literature, especially in prayers, and the phrase "our father" referring to God is often employed to refer to the relationship between the people of Israel and God.[26] However, the use of the intimate "my father in heaven" is found only once in a rabbinic text and that text belongs to Hasidic literature.

The phrase "my father in heaven" in any form does not appear in the Mishnah, Tosefta or either of the two Talmuds, and it is rarely found in aggadic midrashim. It does appear twice in halachic midrashim, but not as direct address or supplication to God. In Mechilta, Rabbi Natan describes the martyrdom of the people of Israel during the period of the Hadrianic decrees (fourth decade of the second century C.E.), and states: "These plagues have caused my father in heaven to love me even more."[27]

The second halachic midrash in which the phrase appears is given in the name of Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah:

> …one should not say, "I could never wear *sha'atnez* [clothing of wool and linen woven together], eat pork, or engage in illicit sexual acts." Rather, one should say, "It is possible, but I will not do these things since my father in heaven has forbidden them."[28]

These are the only rabbinic uses of the phrase "my father in heaven." On the other hand, the phrase appears no fewer than seventeen times in Seder Eliyahu, and almost always in direct address: "My father in heaven, remember your mercy," "May it be your will, my father in heaven,"[29] and the like.[30]

Seder Eliyahu is unique in terms of its content and dates to quite an early period.[31] More importantly, it reflects what remains of Hasidic literature embedded within the greater corpus of rabbinic literature.[32] Only in this Hasidic work does one find "my father" used in direct address between a "son" and his heavenly father. In the rest of rabbinic literature one finds only the more neutral "our father in heaven" or "our father, our king," with the plural possessive pronoun.

A more explicit example of how the Hasidim saw themselves and how the sages saw them — as sons of their heavenly father — is found in one of the earliest references to the Hasidim, the story of Honi the Circle Drawer (first century B.C.E.) and the people's request that he pray for rain. Honi prays to God and says: "Your sons turned to me because I am like a member [lit., 'son'] of your household." Shim'on ben Shetah, who was not very happy with the manner in which Honi addressed God, sent him a message:

If you were not Honi, I would have decreed a ban against you. But what can I do with you? You are impertinent in making demands of God, but he does what you want. You are just like a son who wheedles and cajoles his father and gets his way. Regarding you the verse states, "May your father and mother be glad, and may she who gave you birth rejoice" [Proverbs 23:25].[33]

The people of Israel are quite often referred to collectively as the "sons" of God; however, hardly ever is anyone, sage or otherwise, referred to as "son" when the father is clearly God.

Regarding Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa, a resident of the Galilean settlement of Araba and one of the central figures in the Hasidic movement at the end of the Second Temple period (first cent. C.E.), the Babylonian sage Rav said:

> Every day a heavenly voice goes forth from Mount Horev and proclaims, "The whole world is provided with food on account of my son Hanina, while my son Hanina is satisfied with a *kav* of carobs from one Sabbath eve to another."[34]

It is likewise related that when Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai asked Hanina ben Dosa to pray for the recovery of his sick son, his wife turned to him and said: "And is Hanina greater than you?" Rabban Yohanan answered, "No, but he is like a slave of his master the king, and I am like a minister of the king."[35] In tannaic literature a slave is not someone who works in the fields of his master's farm, but rather one who serves his master in a very intimate relationship. The minister of a king is an important figure in the kingdom, but must maintain a proper distance from the king. In this saying, Rabban Yohanan admits that Hanina has a more intimate and privileged relationship with God

than he.

The Babylonian Talmud contains a series of stories about Hasidic charismatics who could cause rain to fall. Ta'anit 23[b] tells of one such Hasid, Hanan Ha-Nehba, the son of Honi's daughter. During periods of drought young children were sent to him and they would tug on the folds of his garment and beg, "*Abba*, *abba*, give us rain." Then Hanan would pray, "Master of the Universe, do this for these who are unable to distinguish between a father who can give rain and one who cannot."

It appears from the above passages that the Hasidim and those associated with them, including Jesus, considered their relationship with God to be one of extreme familiarity. It is true that already in the Bible the people of Israel are referred to as sons or children of God: "You are the sons of the LORD your God" (Deut. 14:1). Likewise, in rabbinic teaching Israel is called "sons" of God: "Beloved are Israel for they were called sons of God; still greater was the love in that it was made known to them that they were called sons of God."[36] One sage stated that even when Israel sins, they still are sons of the LORD their God."[37] However, in Hasidic circles the relationship of a Hasid to God was not just one of "child of God," but of a son who can brazenly make requests of his father that someone else cannot make. The Hasid addressed God as "*abba*," "my father," or "my father in heaven," and the LORD responded the way he responded to "Hanina, my son."

Miracle Workers

Most of the passages pertaining to Hasidim refer to their causing rain to fall, healing the sick or exorcising demons that caused the people much fear. The first literary reference to the Hasidic movement is the reference to Honi the Circle Drawer in the Mishnah, Ta'anit 3:8: "Pray for rain to fall."[38] The Gemara to this mishnah, in both Talmuds, expands upon the rain theme and the Hasidim who were called upon to bring down rain.[39] For instance, it is stated, "If you see a generation over whom the heavens are rust-colored[40] like copper so that neither dew nor rain falls…go to the Hasid of that generation that he may intercede abundantly."[41] In a story about Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa it is stated that "he used to pray for the sick."[42] Further stories tell of exorcism of evil spirits by Hanina ben Dosa and other Hasidim.[43]

It should be stressed that all the stories indicate that people turned to the Hasidim and to no other group to effect cures or exorcise evil spirits. People may occasionally have turned to more mainstream sages to pray for rain within the framework of the ceremonies connected with drought, but they went only to Hasidim to cure illness or chase away spirits.

Even in the case of rain, there is a difference between the Hasidim and the sages. The sage prayed for rain as part of a public prayer ritual — sometimes his prayers were answered and sometimes they were not.[44] The Hasid prayed privately and as a son beseeching his father. Thus, for example, Honi the Circle Drawer was in Jerusalem not far from the Temple when he was asked to pray for rain, but he did not choose to pray in the Temple. Rather he sought solitude to beseech his father in heaven. Abba Hilkiyah, the grandson of Honi, or "the Hasid of the village of Umi" as he is known in a different version of the story, did not pray for rain in public or in the course of a public ceremony as did Rabbi Akiva and other sages, but went to the second floor of his house and there, together with his wife, prayed for rain.[45] Hanan Ha-Nehba, another grandson of Honi, used to pray in a similar manner when the little children grabbed the folds of his garment and begged him to bring rain.[46] Unlike the sages, though, the prayers of the

Hasidim were always answered.

Tannaic halachah does not formulate demands based on the presupposition that miracles will occur. The Halachah in some cases demands the sacrifice of one's life to avoid committing a transgression,[47] and makes no promise of relief or salvation through a miracle. The sages taught that when danger threatens, a person engaged in prayer should remove himself from the danger.[48] A person who prays for rain or healing receives no assurance that his prayers will be answered on the spot. Furthermore, according to tannaic halachah in both Mishnah and *baraita*, if non-Jews threaten to destroy a Jewish city unless a certain Jew is handed over to them, the residents of the city should hand over the person and not depend on a miracle to save the city.[49]

The behavior and actions of the Hasidim show their opposition to this realistic view of the sages. The Hasidic perspective on miracles is found as early as the days of Honi and continues until the end of the tannaic period and beginning of the amoraic period. Thus, for instance, Honi not only begged God, like a little child begs his father, to bring down rain, but was so confident of the results of his prayer that he told those who had asked him to pray for rain: "Go bring in your Passover ovens [made of clay] so that they will not be softened by the rain."[50] The Hasid of the village of Umi went up to the roof with his wife to pray for rain, sure of success. Out of a sense of modesty, he did discuss with his wife the possibility that it might not rain, but it was obvious to him that his prayer would be answered.[51]

The same confidence is also apparent in the actions of Hanina ben Dosa. The fifth chapter of Mishnah tractate Berachot is a reservoir of Hasidic teaching. It contains very little halachah, primarily describing the deeds of the "first Hasidim" and the Hasid Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa.[52] The first mishnah in chapter five states that one should not stop in the middle of reciting the Eighteen Benedictions: "Even if the king asks after his health he should not respond, nor even if a snake winds itself around his leg." This halachah is not in keeping with the normative view that at any time or in any situation, if there is doubt concerning danger to human life, one should act to preserve life, even if it means violating commandments of the Torah. Unquestionably, it is permissible to interrupt one's prayer or move out of danger if one's life is endangered.

The two Talmuds try to interpret this mishnah so that it will not conflict with normative halachah. Thus, both Talmuds explain that one does not respond to the greeting of a king of Israel during the reciting of the Eighteen Benedictions — a Jewish king would undoubtedly understand — but "in the case of a Gentile king, one always responds to his greeting."[53] One does not interrupt the "Eighteen" if a snake winds itself around one's leg, but one can do so, according to the Talmuds, in the case of a scorpion.[54] However, the plain meaning of the mishnah is that one does not interrupt the Eighteen Benedictions even in the case of mortal danger. A "king" in rabbinic literature is usually a Gentile king, and the danger posed by poisonous snakes was well-known.

There are midrashic accounts[55] as well as stories in the Talmuds[56] about Hasidim who stood and prayed beside a road or in an open field and did not interrupt their prayer to return the greeting of a passing official or when a snake approached. Not only were they not harmed, the snake that bit one of them actually died. The Midrash compares the king and the snake and finds them quite similar: "Just as the snake hisses and kills, so also the kingdom hisses at a man and kills him."[57] The snake is dangerous and kills just as the "kingdom," that is, the Roman Empire, kills.

The central idea of Mishnah Tractate Berachot's fifth chapter is that one should *never* interrupt the "Eighteen," even when one's life is threatened. The Hasidim, who acted in

accordance with this dictum, were always saved from danger. Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa took the snake that died after biting him, put it on his shoulder and went to the house of study. When he arrived, he exclaimed: "See, my children, the viper does not kill; it is sin that kills!"[58]

In the Mishnah, Berachot 5:5, we find the following account:

> They used to remark about Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa that he would pray for the sick and say, "This one will live and this one will die." They said to him, "How do you know?" He said, "If the prayer comes out of my mouth fluently, I know that it is granted; but if not, I know that it is rejected."

Both Talmuds tell of Hanina ben Dosa's prayers for the son of Rabban Gamaliel and for the son of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai.[59] The Jerusalem Talmud relates the story about Rabban Gamaliel's son:

> It happened that the son of Rabban Gamaliel became ill and he sent two disciples to Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa. He [Hanina] said to them, "Wait while I go to my upper room," and he went upstairs. When he came down, he said, "I am certain that Rabban Gamaliel's son is much better now." At that very moment, Rabban Gamaliel's son asked for something to eat.

The version in the Babylonian Talmud is similar. In other words, Rabbi Hanina prayed and was certain that his prayer was answered.

Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa, as well as other Hasidim, also exorcised demons found near springs, and evil spirits that had entered the bodies of people.[60] There are, however, no accounts of the sages exorcising evil spirits. This was apparently an activity that was peculiar to the Hasidim.

An interesting story, although somewhat later than the ones mentioned above, is that of Ulla bar Kosher.[61] It is related that the Roman authorities tried to arrest him and that he fled to Lod. Soldiers surrounded the city and gave an ultimatum: unless Ulla were handed over to them, they would destroy the entire city. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, convinced Ulla to surrender himself, and the city was saved. However, the prophet Elijah, who used to appear to Rabbi Yehoshua on a regular basis, ceased at this point to appear to him.[62] When Elijah finally did appear to him again, after Rabbi Yehoshua had fasted many times, Rabbi Yehoshua asked him why he had stopped coming to him. Elijah answered: "Do I appear to informers?" Rabbi Yehoshua responded by saying that he had acted in accordance with halachah and with the mishnah which state that if non-Jews demand that a specific person be handed over, "he should be handed over in order that they [the rest] not be killed."[63] The prophet Elijah, however, was angered by this view and said: "Is this the teaching (literally, 'mishnah') of the Hasidim?" According to the teaching of the Hasidim, the residents of the city would not have been harmed had they refused to hand Ulla over to the authorities. Elijah blamed Rabbi Yehoshua for not trusting in God's intervention.

Miracles were an integral part of Jesus' ministry and the ministry of his followers. The Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John contain many references to the healing of the sick, lepers and paralyzed, the casting out of demons and the raising of the dead. The Gospels mention that Jesus went from synagogue to synagogue in Galilee in order to cast out demons.[64] It is related a number of times that Jesus healed the sick on the

Sabbath, resulting in discussions about the relationship between man and the Sabbath.[65] Jesus' acts of healing caused non-Jews to seek him out, and he expressed his views regarding them.[66] Jesus even came in contact with Samaritans in the course of his healing ministry, and he compared the different responses of a Samaritan leper and some Jewish lepers he had healed.[67]

Jesus stressed that curative and miraculous power comes from faith.[68] Thus, for example, his disciples did not succeed in healing a young boy possessed by a demon because they lacked sufficient faith; only Jesus, through his faith, was able to heal him.[69] When Jesus sent out his twelve disciples to spread his teachings and foster his mission, he commanded them, "Proclaim: 'The kingdom of heaven is here!' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and cast out demons."[70] The Gospels even mention one man who was not Jesus' disciple who was casting out demons through the name of Jesus.[71] In the passage appended to the end of the Gospel of Mark,[72] Jesus appears after his crucifixion and states, "In my name they will cast out demons…they will pick up snakes, and if they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them. They will lay hands on the sick and they will recover."[73]

Jesus' miracles are much more numerous than those described in the literature of the Hasidim, or in stories about Hasidim found in rabbinic literature. However it is important to remember that rabbinic literature was not written for the purpose of transmitting the biographies and histories of Hasidim. Stories about the deeds and sayings of Hasidim are only a small part of rabbinic literature. The sages were not interested as such in the Hasidim, and most of the stories about them have survived because of an interest in the response of a sage to the saying or deed of a Hasid. For example, the story about Honi the Circle Drawer and his prayer for rain was included in rabbinic literature to give Shim'on ben Shetah's response. The healings of Hanina ben Dosa were preserved to show the reactions of Rabban Gamaliel and Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai.

Yet, even this small corpus of Hasidic material enables one to see many similarities in language and detail between the miracles of Jesus and those of the Hasidim. In the story of Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa's exorcism of an evil spirit, Hanina spoke to the spirit: "Why do you torment a daughter of Abraham our father?"[74] Jesus responded in a similar manner when the head of the synagogue in Capernaum asked him why he was healing on the Sabbath: "Shouldn't this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years, be loosed on the Sabbath from what bound her?"[75]

In the story of the centurion's slave (Mt. 8:5-13; Lk. 7:1-10), it is reported that Jesus healed the slave without going to the house where he was lying. In the slightly different version of the story found in John 4:43-53, it is added that Jesus informed the man that his son would live, and upon returning home the man discovered that his son had indeed been healed at one o'clock, the exact time Jesus had told him this. In almost identical language the Jerusalem Talmud describes the healing (mentioned above) of Rabban Gamaliel's son by Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa. The version of the story that appears in the Babylonian Talmud is quite similar, except that there it is stated: "At that very moment his fever broke and he asked us for water to drink."[76]

There are two interesting expressions found in the addendum to the Gospel of Mark (16:9-20) that can be understood quite well in light of what we know about the Hasidim. Jesus promised his disciples that they would "pick up snakes,"[77] and should they drink deadly poison, it would not hurt them. Jesus' promise about handling snakes is reminiscent of the story about Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa.[78] When he was bitten by a reptile, he was not harmed; rather the reptile died. Jesus promised his disciples that

when they were sent in his name on preaching and healing missions, snakes would not be able to harm them.[79]

Jesus' statement about drinking poison can also be understood against the background of Hasidic practice and beliefs. The halachah states that it is forbidden to drink water or other beverages that have been left in an open container, since a snake may have drunk from it and left its venom in the liquid. This ruling is repeated a number of times in rabbinic literature.[80]

There is plentiful evidence that the people did refrain from drinking beverages that had been left uncovered, and that observance of this halachah was widespread.[81] A passage in the Jerusalem Talmud[82] mentions a certain Hasid who used to ridicule[83] those who were careful not to drink liquids that had been sitting in an open container. However, the Hasid "came down with a high fever and was seen sitting and teaching on the Day of Atonement with a bowl of water in his hand." The story is anti-Hasidic and was given in rabbinic literature to show the consequences of disregarding the rulings of the sages. This particular Hasid was apparently also a sage and he taught in public on the Day of Atonement. He was forced to drink water (ordinarily a violation of the fast) to keep his fever down, thus suffering public embarrassment for his presumption, and proving that no one, not even a Hasid, could violate this prohibition with impunity.

It is inconceivable that this Hasid was irresponsible or that he made light of the sages' view out of disrespect for the commandments. Undoubtedly, he was certain that "the snake does not kill," and, like Hanina ben Dosa who would not interrupt his prayer because of a snake, felt that being careful not to drink uncovered water was an unnecessary hindrance to his religious activities. Notice that Jesus gave his disciples authority over the forces of nature;[84] in effect, he assured them that, when on a mission for him, they would be able to drink from stagnant pools of water along the road without suffering harm.

Poverty & Wealth

All historical, literary and archaeological sources testify that the economic situation of the Jews in the Land of Israel was good at the end of the Second Temple Period, and following the destruction of the Temple. Although the country lacked mineral resources and did not play a role in international commerce, intensive farming enabled the residents of the land to earn an adequate living. As Josephus states: "We do not reside along a seacoast and we do not enjoy commercial trade…but rather our cities are far from the sea and we labor cultivating our fertile land."[85]

This is also the general picture provided by rabbinic literature and the New Testament. Poverty occurred only at such specific times as the period immediately following the destruction of the Temple, the period after the Bar-Kochva Revolt, and the period of anarchy in the third century. There does not seem to have been general economic suffering at other times, and stories about the sages do not mention their poverty except during these difficult periods.

There are various traditions, such as those about Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus[86] and the Babylonian traditions about Hillel,[87] which mention the poverty of the sages while they were disciples when they had left their parents' homes to devote all their time to studying Torah. One also thinks of the disciples to whom Peter referred when he said, "Behold, we have left our homes and followed you" (Lk. 18:28). However, these sages had no difficulty supporting themselves when they were older, and there were many

who were affluent and had considerable possessions. Overall, poverty did not characterize the world of the sages during either the Second Temple period (see Glossary, p. 44) or the Yavneh period (70-132 C.E.).

The sages did not see personal wealth as evil, but taught that one ought not acquire it unjustly nor use it to persecute the poor.[88] Wealth should not exempt one from communal responsibilities and from the study of Torah, or from behaving with humility.[89]

Among the sages there were those who were well-to-do, and some who were quite wealthy. Hillel was comfortably well off, and after the Second Temple period there were wealthy sages such as Rabbi Eleazar ben Harsom,[90] Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah[91] and Rabbi Tarfon.[92] That is not to say that there were not poor sages such as Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananiah,[93] Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri[94] and others. There was, however, no ill feeling toward the wealthy sages, and we find positive sentiments expressed about Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah, for instance, even by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananiah.[95]

It should be pointed out that prestige was not a function of economic status, at least at this time. Although it was later stated that "Rabbi [Yehudah ha-Nasi] honors the wealthy,"[96] in the official decisions of the Usha period (140 C.E.ff.), and even earlier during the Yavneh period of Rabban Gamaliel, it was explicitly stated that one should not give away to the needy more than a fifth of one's possessions.[97] Both Talmuds relate regarding Rabbi Yesheveav, a Yavneh period sage, that "he went and distributed all his possessions to the needy," and the sages protested that his action went counter to their teaching that one should give no more than a fifth of one's possessions to the poor.[98]

Rabbi Yesheveav, generally referred to as "Rabbi Yesheveav the scribe," was one of the ten martyrs who were put to death in the period of religious persecution after the Bar-Kochva Revolt.[99] In Song of Songs Rabbah he is described in the following manner:

> The tenth [martyr] was Rabbi Yesheveav from among the last of the Hasidim. When Rabbi[100] saw him, he recited over him the following verse: "Help LORD, for the godly man [Hebrew: *Hasid*] is no more" [Ps. 12:2].[101]

If this late midrash actually preserves an earlier tradition reflecting the tannaic period, and Rabbi Yesheveav is in fact a Hasid ("among the last of the Hasidim"), then his actions in distributing all his possessions would be quite understandable.

In Hasidic thought, penury is considered the ideal state that leads to all the other positive and praiseworthy qualities of character. Moreover, the stories about Hasidim usually stress their poverty. Rabbinic sources, on the other hand, generally mention the poverty of sages only during especially difficult times economically.

In discussing the ideology of poverty in Hasidic thought, it is worthwhile to examine a teaching of Hillel the Elder during whose time (end of first century B.C.E.-beginning of first century C.E.) there was already a degree of tension between the sages and the Hasidim.[102] It is stated in the Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah 9[b]:

> Elijah said to Bar He He, and others say, to Rabbi Eleazar, "What is the meaning of the verse [Isaiah 48:10], 'Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver [literally, "and not with silver," which could be understood, "because you have no money"]; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction [the word for "affliction" can also mean

> "poverty"]'? This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed is He, examined every good quality and found none better for Israel than poverty."[103]

The notion that the ideal quality for Israel is poverty was not the commonly accepted view among the sages, but was certainly prevalent in Hasidic thought. As I have shown elsewhere,[104] the early midrashic works Seder Eliyahu Rabbah and Seder Eliyahu Zuta (together known as Seder Eliyahu) represent some of the most important remnants of Hasidic thinking. These works do not really purport to speak in the name of Elijah, and nowhere in these works is it stated or even hinted that Elijah himself authored the statements. Although the Babylonian Talmud ascribes these works to Elijah,[105] the author of Seder Eliyahu makes no such claim.[106] In the discussion found in two places in Seder Eliyahu pertaining to the tribe to which Elijah belonged,[107] this question is presented in the same manner in which it is discussed in Genesis Rabbah.[108] The sages discuss the matter among themselves and then Elijah appears before them and states, "I am from the seed of Rachel." Another passage in Seder Eliyahu deals with Elijah in the third person in the same way that the work discusses other biblical figures.[109] In these examples, Elijah appears and speaks, but is not the author of the work.

In Seder Eliyahu Zuta,[110] there is a teaching on the value of poverty which is based on Isaiah 48:10 quoted above, but this time it is not Elijah who speaks. The teaching is simply a continuation of the midrashic discussion on the poor and wealthy; and although the two sources apparently are not dependent upon each other for this teaching, their language is almost identical.

The Babylonian Talmud does occasionally cite from Seder Eliyahu in the name of *Tanna d've Eliyahu* ("a teaching of the school of Eliyahu") or *Tannu Rabbanan* ("our rabbis taught"), or even without ascribing authorship.[111] The Hasidic teaching referred to above in the Babylonian Talmud (Hagigah 9^b) is cited in the name of Elijah; however, in the fifth chapter of Seder Eliyahu Zuta, this same teaching appears without reference to Elijah within the framework of a detailed discussion on the value of poverty, and continues:

> Because of poverty they fear the LORD… one becomes a doer of good deeds only because of poverty; one becomes a giver of charity only because of poverty; one becomes a doer of charitable deeds only because of poverty; one becomes a fearer of God only because of poverty.

The idea is repeated once more in another passage in this midrash, in a teaching about the behavior of man:

> A person becomes a Hasid to suffer all things. He is given an angel who treats him in the manner of the Hasidim…and says, "You save the afflicted [the word for 'afflicted' can also mean 'poor'], but your eyes are on the haughty ['the rich,' in this context] to humble them" [2 Samuel 22:28]. "You save the afflicted" — [this refers to a] people for whom poverty is becoming.[112]

Seder Eliyahu Rabbah and Seder Eliyahu Zuta are Hasidic works and date from the Second Temple period, not the First Temple period. Although the Babylonian Talmud states that Elijah is the author of Seder Eliyahu, and some of the sayings in the Babylonian Talmud such as Elijah's statement to Bar He He in Hagigah 9^b are attributed to Elijah, nowhere in Seder Eliyahu itself is it claimed that Elijah is the author of the

work.

I have shown elsewhere that the small compilation known as Derech Eretz Zuta is one of the most marked expressions of the Hasidic movement and served as the basis for both Seder Eliyahu Rabbah and Zuta.[113] At the beginning of this work, in all versions of the text, there is a description of the characteristics of the sage: "he is humble…a fearer of sin, judges a man according to his deeds, and says, 'I have no need of anything found in this world.'" These are basically the characteristics of the Hasid as found in Avot 5:10 in the Mishnah: "What is mine is yours and what is yours is yours — [this is the attitude of] a Hasid."

There are many references to the poverty of the Hasidim. One of the first descriptions of Hasidic poverty is the beautiful and detailed story about the Hasid of the village of Umi.[114] This story is recorded in the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud. In both versions the story's contents are very similar;[115] however, in the Jerusalem Talmud, the episode concerns a Hasid from Umi while in the Babylonian Talmud the story refers to Abba Hilkiyah, a grandson of Honi the Circle Drawer. The Hasid's poverty is stressed throughout the entire account: he was a day laborer; the *tallith* (mantle) he was so careful about was not his own, but was borrowed so that he might be able to pray;[116] to protect his sandals and keep them from wearing out, he did not wear them unless it was absolutely necessary; there was not much food in his house.

There are also many references to the poverty of Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa, the most prominent of the Hasidic personalities. Under pressure from his wife, he petitioned Heaven and was given the golden leg of a table. Later, however, he asked that it be taken back since he was afraid that this wealth might take away from his portion in the world to come,[117] that is, he feared that he would have a two-legged table in the World to Come — in Hanina's time, tables had three legs. The vast wealth of Eleazar ben Azariah, of Rabbi Tarfon, and of other sages did not seem to cause them concern that their heavenly reward would be reduced.

At the beginning of both Song of Songs Rabbah and Ecclesiastes Rabbah it is related that once Rabbi Hanina was not able to join the residents of his town in bringing sacrifices to Jerusalem. The author of the account relates that Hanina was too poor to take a votive offering up to Jerusalem, and therefore took "a stone from the wilderness of his town," dressed it and took it to Jerusalem.[118] Most likely, this stone was for King Herod's Temple Mount construction project, which continued even after the death of Herod until close to the Great Revolt which began in 66 C.E.

Tractate Ta'anit 24^{b}-25^{a} of the Babylonian Talmud gives a number of stories about the poverty of Hanina and the miraculous ways in which God delivered him out of his distress. The Babylonian Talmud records several times the saying of Rav:

> Every day a heavenly voice goes forth from Mount Horev and proclaims, "The whole world is provided with food on account of my son Hanina, while my son Hanina is satisfied with a *kav*[119] of carobs from one Sabbath eve to another."[120]

Another poverty stricken Hasid was Abba Tahnah. Ecclesiastes Rabbah 9:7 relates that once on the Sabbath eve when Abba Tahnah was returning home carrying a load of sticks, he was accosted by a man afflicted with boils lying at the side of the road who begged him to help him into the city. Although for a moment he hesitated, he put down his load and got the stricken person into the city. Afterwards, he returned for his sticks and entered the city at dusk, very close to the beginning of the Sabbath, causing some

people to question his piety.[121] Abba Tahnah himself was afraid that he might have desecrated the Sabbath, "but at that very moment God made the sun shine," giving Abba Tahnah additional time before the beginning of Sabbath. Abba Tahnah had only hesitated to help the afflicted man because that would have meant leaving the sticks he had gathered and possible losing them. He had thought to himself: "If this should happen, how will I support myself and my family?" Collecting firewood to support oneself is a classic indication of a poor person in the literature of the period. Abba Hilkiyah also supported himself in this manner, and so did Rabbi Akiva before he became famous,[122] as did Hillel, according to the text of the Babylonian Talmud.[123]

Midrashim composed in the land of Israel preserve the following saying of Rabbi Akiva: "Poverty becomes Israel like a red strap across the breast of a white horse."[124] The thrust of this saying is that poverty, like other afflictions, leads Israel to repentance. Although poverty might have some positive results, Rabbi Akiva considered it an evil that one should not seek. For the Hasidim, however, poverty was intrinsically beneficial and they strove to be poor.

The idea that poverty brings one closer to God and his kingdom is found explicitly in the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 6:24 we read: "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." This sentiment is echoed in Luke 16:13, and in Matthew it is found within the context of verses 25-34 which stress that one should not worry about not having food or clothing, indicating the futility of praying for such things.

In 1976 David Flusser and I published an article on Matthew 6:24, in which we argued that this verse corresponds to certain aspects of rabbinic thought, and we attributed the negative attitude toward wealth to the influence of Essene teachings.[125] Now, however, it would seem that this negative attitude derives more from the similarity of Jesus' world view to that of the Hasidim. The life style of Jesus, his attitude to society and to both the Written and Oral Law, the domain of the sages, his manner of teaching and his association with his disciples were much more similar to the Hasidim than to the Essenes. In fact, Jesus really had very little in common with the Essenes.

Jesus' position regarding wealth can also be seen quite clearly in the story of the wealthy young man found in Matthew 19:16-22, Mark 10:17-22 and Luke 18:18-23. Each of the Gospels differs slightly in its version of the conversation between the rich man and Jesus, but they all agree on one thing: Jesus made the acceptance of the young man into the kingdom of heaven conditional upon his giving away his money and possessions to the poor. All three Gospels also include Jesus' admonition that it is very difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

What Jesus demanded of the wealthy young man is exactly what Rabbi Yesheveav did when he distributed all his possessions among the needy, to the chagrin of Rabban Gamaliel and the other sages, as mentioned above.[126]

One may conclude that it was generally accepted within the rabbinic world that a person ought not give away all his money to the poor and thereby become poor himself, and a burden to society. Poverty was not an ideal that one should strive to attain, and the sages did not see any necessary ethical or spiritual value in being poor. One finds in Hasidic teaching, however, that poverty was an ideal and that the poverty which characterized the Hasidim was a deliberate choice. But the Hasidim were not impoverished simply because their devotion to the performance of good deeds prevented them from working enough to support themselves. Rather, they were happy with little and even emphasized

the value of poverty as a virtue and means of spiritual attainment.

Torah Study

Jewish literature throughout the entire Second Temple period stressed the meaning and importance of the study of Torah. This emphasis is seen in several Psalms which date from the beginning of the Second Temple period, and especially in the writings of such Jewish authors as Philo and Josephus. The study of Torah in a variety of forms — in private, in a group together with a sage and his disciples, by disciples alone, or public study — is described by numerous authors of the Second Temple period.

Torah study was particularly important to the Pharisees and to those groups associated with them. Most of the sayings or deeds described in the Mishnah Tractate Avot reflect the importance of studying Torah,[127] and it is an important motif in a number of works of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, such as IV Ezra and Baruch, which reflect an outlook similar to that of the sages. The Dead Sea sect also emphasized the importance of Torah study, although not to the extent that the sages did.

Unlike the sages,[128] however, the Hasidim did not seek a balance between "study" and "deed," but maintained that the deed is to be preferred even at the expense of Torah study.[129] When they mentioned the saying in the Mishnah that refers to the fruits of certain deeds that are enjoyed in the world to come, they deleted the saying's conclusion which states that "the study of Torah is equal to them all."[130]

Similarly, in the teaching and deeds of Jesus there is no reference to the study of Torah. Jesus does deal with various aspects of everyday life, and in addition to the many teachings of Jesus on repentance, salvation and the expectation of the kingdom of heaven, there are also stories about Jesus' behavior and his requests and demands of those who followed him. Jesus sometimes rebuked those of little faith or those who did not believe in the future redemption or who were immodest, and the like. Yet, according to the Gospels, Jesus never raised the issue of Torah study.

The lack of references to the study of Torah in the teaching of Jesus does not derive from his estrangement from Torah or from his ignorance of it. Everything attributed to Jesus testifies to his rich cultural background and wide knowledge, and many of his sayings, parables and deeds suggest considerable sophistication. The content of his teaching also illustrates a wide knowledge of ancient literary sources, whether of Bible, biblical interpretation or Midrash.

Jesus' apparent neglect of the topic of Torah study should be understood in light of the importance that he, like the Hasidim, gave to living out one's values. By not speaking of the study of Torah he gave more emphasis to the importance of the deed in the life of man and his quest for the kingdom of heaven.

The accounts of the actions and responses of Jesus are perhaps more consistent and even more extreme regarding the dichotomy between study and deed than is apparent in the limited amount of Hasidic literature. Jesus does not try to prove that the deed is preferable to study, but by his speech and behavior he exemplifies the importance of man's deeds and wholly ignores the significance of the study of Torah.

Conclusion

I do not claim that Jesus was actually a Hasid or a member in any form or fashion of the basically Galilean Hasidic movement of his time. I have, however, endeavored to show the similarity and affinity between Jesus and the Hasidim in teaching, lifestyle, behavior and relationship with the sages.

The stories about Jesus do not mention that anyone ever approached him with the request that he pray for rain. Perhaps there were no droughts during Jesus' brief ministry, but more likely the very nature of the request to a Hasid to bring rain precluded Jesus' involvement in such a matter. The Hasidim were usually approached by the establishment or by sages who often sent young children to arouse their feelings of compassion. It took years for a Hasid to become so well-known that the establishment would turn to him in an emergency, and it appears from the Gospel records that Jesus' public career was so short that he may not yet have come to the attention of the establishment as a miracle worker.

The healing of the sick was a different matter. In such cases the afflicted person himself, his mother, father or master sought out Jesus. Thus, his healing and his exorcism of demons did not take place in the framework of communal prayer or in the synagogue, but were the result of personal requests directed towards someone who was thought capable of such miracles.

The accounts of Jesus' healings and exorcisms are far more numerous than those of Hanina ben Dosa, Honi or other such charismatics. It is important to remember, however, that while the Gospels intended to relate Jesus' entire history from before his birth to his crucifixion, rabbinic literature had no intention of presenting the history of the Hasidim. The stories about the Hasidim are generally cited in rabbinic literature to portray the response of the sages to their actions. Thus, we have very few "*halachot* [rulings] of the Hasidim"[131] (= "*mishnah* of the Hasidim").[132]

For example, the story about the rain Honi caused to fall was not related to recount his success, but rather as support for the ruling that the shofar is not sounded and a public fast is not declared in the case of "excessive rainfall."[133] Likewise, the healing by Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa was not related for the greater glory of this sage; but, it seems, to point out the difference between a "member of the king's household" and a "minister of the king."[134]

It is also necessary to remember that the entire corpus of material pertaining to the lives and activities of the Hasidim deals almost exclusively with miracles wrought by them. There is a relatively small amount of material pertaining to Hasidim themselves, and no halachic statements at all are given in their names. Even such a famous Hasid as Hanina ben Dosa, who is referred to quite often in the Talmuds and the Midrash, has only a few aggadic sayings cited in his name in Avot,[135] and these are cited to emphasize his saintliness. Similarly, there are just a few aggadic sayings of Rabbi Pinhas ben Yair, and these are given only to illustrate the teaching of the Hasidim.[136]

Basically, we have only veiled references to Hasidic teachings in a literature that is close in spirit but not identical to theirs. This is enough, however, to show us how similar Jesus was to this first-century Galilean group. For the most part, his deeds were in keeping with the tenets of that group.

---

[1] Josephus, *War* 2:119-166; *Antiq*. 18:11-22.

[2] See David Flusser, "Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes in Pesher Nahum," *Alon Memorial Volume* (Tel Aviv, 1970), pp. 133-168 (Hebrew).
[3] See Zeev Safrai, "*Bene-Rechav*, the Essenes and the Concept of Going to the Desert in the Teachings of the Sages," *Annual of Bar Ilan University* 16/17 (1979), 37-58 (Hebrew).
[4] The expression *katedra demosheh* (the seat of Moses) is mentioned in the teaching of Rav Aha in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana 1 (ed. Mandelbaum, p. 12). The first scholar to point this out was W. Bacher, "*Le siege de Moise*," *REJ* 34 (1897), 299.
[5] E. L. Sukenik, "*Kathedra De Moshe* in Ancient Synagogues," *Tarbiz* 1 (1930), 145-151 (Hebrew). See the comments of J. N. Epstein *ad loc*., p. 152.
[6] On the opposition of the Sadducees to this levy, see Megillat Ta'anit itself (beginning), and also its scholium (ed. H. Lichtenstein, *Hebrew Union College Annual* 8-9 [1931-32], pp. 318, 323). On the view of the Essenes, see J. Liver, "The Half-Shekel in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Tarbiz* 31 (1962), 18-22 (Hebrew), and David Flusser, "The Half-Shekel in the Gospels and in the Teaching of the Dead Sea Sect," *Tarbiz* 31 (1962), 150-156 (Hebrew). For a new source pertaining to this subject, see the Temple Scroll, XXXIX, 7-10. For proof of the view that the half-shekel tax as we know it from the last few generations of the Second Temple period was an innovation of the Pharisees or their spiritual ancestors, see J. Liver, "The Half-Shekel," *Kaufmann Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1961), pp. 54-67 (Hebrew).
[7] Mt. 17:24-27, and see David Flusser's article cited in note 6.
[8] Mt. 4:23; Mark 1:39. It is especially important to note Lk. 4:16ff., which mentions Jesus' reading of the Torah and Prophets, and afterwards, his *derashah* (sermon).
[9] The tannaic and amoraic sources that mention the functions of the synagogue emphasize mainly the reading and teaching of Torah. Whenever the synagogue is mentioned in the Gospels or in Acts, it is within the context of reading or studying of the Torah and not in relation to prayer, which is the same general picture found in tannaic literature. For our purposes it is sufficient to cite the *baraita* in Tosefta (= T), Megillah 2:18 (parallels in the Babylonian Talmud [= BT] and the Jerusalem Talmud [= JT]:
Synagogues — one does not treat them frivolously. One should not enter them when the sun beats down to get out of the sun, nor when it is cold to get out of the cold, nor when it is raining to get out of the rain. One does not eat in them, nor does one drink in them. And one should not sleep in them, nor promenade in them, nor adorn oneself there. Rather, in them one reads [the Torah], studies, preaches and gives public eulogies.
The *baraita* in listing the functions of the synagogue — reading the Torah, studying, preaching and eulogizing — does not mention prayer. There certainly was prayer in the synagogue, but clearly its major function, as demonstrated by rabbinic literature and the Gospels, was to facilitate the public reading of the Torah, study and preaching. For additional sources, see Shmuel Safrai, "Gathering in the Synagogue on the Sabbath and on Weekdays," *Ancient Synagogues in Israel*, BAR International Series 499 (1989), pp. 7-15.
[10] *Although there were Hasidic sages too, in this article Prof. Safrai usually uses "sages" as a synonym for "Pharisees," and as the opposite of "Hasidim." -Ed.*
[11] See Bradford Young, *The Jewish Background to the Lord's Prayer* (Dayton, OH: Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, 1984).
[12] Shmuel Safrai, "Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 16 (1956), 15-33. A somewhat expanded version of this article was published in *Eretz Israel and Its Sages in the Period of the Mishnah and Talmud* (Tel Aviv, 1983), pp. 144-160 (Hebrew). See also my "Hasidim and Men of Deeds," *Zion* 50 (1985), 133-154 (Hebrew).
[13] Such as chapter five of Tractate Berachot in the Mishnah (= M), and several chapters of Derech Eretz Zuta. See *Eretz Israel and Its Sages*, pp. 152-155, and "Hasidim and Men of Deeds," 149-151.
[14] The earliest Hasidic story is that of Honi the Circle Drawer in M Ta'anit 3:8, and the collections of Hasidic stories in the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, Tractate Ta'anit. See Safrai, "Hasidim and Men of Deeds," 141-143.
[15] Such as the saying of Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa in M Avot 3:9, and the *baraita* attributed to Rabbi Pinhas ben Yair (see note 129) that is found in a number of sources composed in the land of Israel, as well as in Babylonian sources. See Safrai, "Hasidim and Men of Deeds," 148.
[16] Such as the story about Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananiah who was sent by Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai to Ramat Bene Anat and there had occasion to admonish a priestly Hasid who was seemingly ignorant of a number of laws of ritual purity mentioned explicitly in the Torah (Avot de-Rabbi Natan, Version A, Chpt. 12 [ed. Schechter, p. 56]; Version B, Chpt. 27 [pp. 56-57]). Similarly, see the statement of Hillel: "The *am ha-aretz* [a person who is not knowledgeable in the commandments] cannot be a Hasid" (M Avot 2:5). See also the rather sharp statement of Rabbi Shim'on ben Yochai in Pirka de-Rabbenu Ha-Kadosh, *Bava de-Arba* (ed. Schenblum, p. 21^{b}).
[17] See Safrai, "Hasidim and Men of Deeds," 134-138.
[18] Gedaliahu Alon (*The History of the Jews in the Land of Israel in the Period of the Mishnah and Talmud* [Tel Aviv, 1952], 1:320 [Hebrew]) gives an example from JT Pesahim V, 32^{a}. In this passage Rabbi Yohanan (thus in the parallel in BT Pesahim 62^{b}) states that he has received a tradition from his predecessors "not to teach aggadah to Babylonians or Southerners because they are vulgar and have inadequate knowledge of Torah." One could add to this the saying found in JT Sanhedrin I, 18^{d}: "Why is the calendrical year not intercalated in Lod [a town located in the 'South,' i.e., Judea]? Because they [the residents of Lod] are vulgar and have inadequate knowledge of Torah." See also Shmuel Safrai, "The Places for the Sanctification of the New Moon and the Intercalation of the Year after the Destruction of the Temple," *Tarbiz* 35 (1966), 27-38 (Hebrew).
[19] Alon, pp. 318-323.

[20] Ibid., p. 320, n. 150.
[21] For a detailed discussion of this subject, see Shmuel Safrai, "The Jewish Cultural Nature of Galilee in the First Century," *Immanuel* 24/25 (1990), 147-186.
[22] "Your [singular] father" appears in Mt. 6:4; 6:6; 6:18; 13:43, *et al*. "Your [plural] father" appears in Mt. 6:8; 6:15; Lk. 6:36; 12:32, *et al*. "Our father" or "Our father in heaven" appears in Mt. 6:1; 6:9; Mk. 11:25, *et al*.
[23] Lk. 10:21-22; Lk. 22:42; Jn. 2:16; 17:1, *et al*.
[24] Mk. 14:36, but in Mt. 26:39 we find *pater mou* (my father), and in Lk. 22:42 only *pater* (father).
[25] See the commentary of Vincent Taylor (*The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 2nd ed. [London, 1966], p. 553), and others. However, according to Robert Lindsey, *abba ho pater* (*Abba*, father) is a typical Markan "pickup," that is, a rare word or phrase that Mark knew and used as a synonym opposite Luke's more original wording. *Abba* appears only three times in the New Testament, once in Mark and twice in Paul's letters, always in the phrase *abba ho pater*. Paul used *abba*, perhaps adding *ho pater* as an explanation for his Greek readers. Mark, in his midrashic way, picked up the whole phrase and substituted it opposite Luke's *pater*, an acceptable Greek translation of *abba*. Matthew agrees with Luke against Mark in using *pater* (father); Matthew's *pater mou* (my father) in 26:39 may preserve *avi*.
[26] See Alon Goshen-Gottstein, *God and Israel as Father and Son in Tannaitic Literature*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1987 (Hebrew).
[27] Mechilta, *De-Va-Hodesh*, *Yitro* 6 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 227, lines 6-10). This saying is also found in Leviticus Rabbah 32:1 (ed. Margulies, pp. 735-736) and in Midrash Psalms 12 (ed. Buber, p. 109). It likewise appears in Midrash Tannaim (ed. Hoffmann, p. 164), though apparently the author of Midrash Tannaim, like the author of Midrash Ha-Gadol (ed. Margulies, p. 570), copied it from Mechilta or from Leviticus Rabbah. The saying is also found in Sefer Ve-Hizhir on Exodus, p. 25^{b}, and in Lekah Tov on Exodus 20:6 (ed. Buber, p. 136).
[28] Sifra, *Kedoshim* (ed. Weiss, p. 93^{d}).
[29] Seder Eliyahu Rabbah 18 (p. 112); 20 (p. 121).
[30] The other places in Seder Eliyahu where God is addressed as "my father in heaven" are Seder Eliyahu Rabbah 10 (p. 51); 11 (p. 63); 17 (p. 83); 18 (pp. 89, 106); 19 (pp. 110, 111, 112 [four times], 119); 24 (p. 134); 28 (p. 149); 29 (pp. 157, 163).
[31] Seder Eliyahu is much earlier than supposed by many scholars and probably dates to around the third century C.E.
[32] See Safrai, "Hasidim and Men of Deeds," 150-151.
[33] M Ta'anit 3:8, and T Ta'anit 3:1.
[34] BT Berachot 17^{b}; Ta'anit 24^{b}; Hullin 86^{a}. God is also said to have called Rabbi Eleazar ben Pedat and Rabbi Eleazar ben Hyrcanus "Eleazar my son" (BT Ta'anit 25^{a}; Tanhuma, *Hukat* 8 [ed. Wilna, p. 565]), and Rabbi Meir "Meir my son" (BT Hagigah 15^{b}). In these instances, however, the expression "my son" is not used with the same sense of intimacy as in the stories of Hasidim.
[35] BT Berachot 34^{b}.
[36] M Avot 3:14. Cf. Avot de-Rabbi Natan, Version A, Chpt. 39 (ed. Schechter, p. 118) and Version B, Chpt. 44 (p. 124).
[37] This was the opinion of Rabbi Meir (Sifre Deuteronomy 96 [ed. Finkelstein, p. 157]). Cf. BT Yoma 22^{b}. See the commentary of Rabbenu Hillel and the comments of Finkelstein *ad loc*.
[38] The same language is used in T Ta'anit 3:1: "It once happened that they requested of a Hasid, 'Pray for rain to fall.'"
[39] BT Ta'anit 23^{a}-25^{b}; JT Ta'anit I, 64^{a-b}.
[40] *Mishtokin*. See *Aruch Completum* 8:183, s.v. shtch, meaning "to become rusted."
[41] BT Ta'anit 8^{a}.
[42] M Berachot 5:5. See the similar tradition in JT Berachot V, 9^{d}.
[43] In *Yihusei Tannaim ve-Amoraim* (ed. Maimon, Jerusalem, 1963), Rabbi Yehudah ben Kalonymus ben Meir of Speyer cites two traditions of unknown origin regarding forces controlled by Rabbi Hanina (p. 438). The first tells of winds which were under his power and the second of an evil spirit which used to disturb a woman neighbor of his. Rabbi Hanina said to the evil spirit: "Why do you torment a daughter of Abraham our father?" In Leviticus Rabbah 24:3 (ed. Margulies, p. 553) there is a story about Abba Yose ben Yohanan of Tsaytur who overcame an evil spirit. In Tanhuma, *Kedoshim* 9 (in both versions of the text: ed. Buber, p. 77; ed. Wilna, p. 443), it is related about the same sage: "A Hasid by the name of Rabbi Yose of Tsaytur was there." The Babylonian Talmud preserves the story of Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa's confrontation with Igrath the daughter of Mahalath, the queen of demons. Hanina commanded her to stay out of settled areas, but when she pleaded with him to "leave her a little room," he allowed her freedom to enter on Wednesday nights and the eve of Sabbaths (Pesahim 112^{b}). See also, Tanhuma, *Va-Yigash* 3 (ed. Wilna, p. 134), which relates how Rabbi Hanina made a lion swear never to appear again in the land of Israel.
[44] See the stories about Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva in BT Ta'anit 25^{b}, and those about Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi in JT Ta'anit III, 66^{c}.
[45] JT Ta'anit I, 64^{b-c}; BT Ta'anit 23^{a-b}.
[46] BT Ta'anit 23^{a-b}. The Babylonian Talmud exhibits a tendency to connect persons who perform similar deeds to the same family. The Hasid from Umi and Hanan Ha-Nehba successfully prayed for rain; thus, they are identified in the Babylonian Talmud as the grandsons of Honi the Circle Drawer. See Shmuel Safrai, "Tales of the Sages in Palestinian Tradition and the Babylonian Talmud," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22 (1971), 229-232.

[47] BT Sanhedrin 74[a]; JP Sanhedrin III, 21[b]; Shevi'it IV, 35[b]; Sifra *Ahare Mot* 13 (ed. Weiss, p. 86[b]).
[48] JT Berachot V, 9[a]; BT Berachot 33[a].
[49] See especially JT Terumot VIII, 46[b].
[50] M Ta'anit 3:8.
[51] JT Ta'anit I, 64[b-c]; BT Ta'anit 23[a].
[52] See Safrai, "Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," pp. 28-31.
[53] JT Berachot V, 9[a]; BT Berachot 32[b]-33[a].
[54] Both Talmuds give these same explanations, although they are cited in the names of different Amoraim: in the Jerusalem Talmud, in the names of Rabbi Aha and Rabbi Yose; in the Babylonian Talmud, in the names of Rabbi Yosef and Rav Sheshet.
[55] Tanhuma, *Va-Era* 4 (ed. Wilna, p. 187); Exodus Rabbah 9 (ed. Shinan, p. 209); Midrash Yelamdenu, published in J. Mann, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue* (New York, 1971), 1:98.
[56] See the sources cited in note 53.
[57] Translated from the version found in Midrash Yelamdenu (ed. Mann), but there are a number of parallels to this saying in midrashic literature.
[58] BT Berachot 32[b]-33[a]. See David Flusser, "It Is Not a Serpent That Kills," *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 543-551.
[59] JT Berachot V, 9[d]; BT Berachot 34[b]. See notes 35 and 42.
[60] See note 43.
[61] JT Terumot VIII, 46[b]; Genesis Rabbah 94 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, p. 1184-1185). The reading of Ms. Leiden of the Jerusalem Talmud is "Koshev." However, in Ms. Vatican 133, in the first printed edition and in the Yemenite ms., the reading is "Kosher." This is also the form of the name in Genesis Rabbah, and in the citation of the Jerusalem Talmud in the commentary of Rabbi Moses Halua (ed. Jerusalem, 1964, p. 63) on BT Pesahim 25[b]. "Kosher" is a wordplay based on the root *k-sh-r,* meaning "to plot," here, to plot against the Roman authorities. This form of the name would fit the continuation of the story. See B. Rattner's *Ahavat Zion Virushalayim* on Pesahim (p. 69), and see Theodor's comments on Genesis Rabbah 94.
[62] Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi numbered among the sages and headed the academy at Lod. However, he also was a Hasid and God performed miracles for him. According to a number of sources, he entered the Garden of Eden without having tasted death (BT Sanhedrin 98[a]; Makkot 11[a]; Ketubot 77[b]; Derech Eretz Zuta 1 [end], *et al*.).
[63] This statement (found in JT Terumot VIII, 46[b] and T Terumot 7:20) is not really a mishnah, but rather a *baraita* that explains a mishnah.
[64] Mk. 1:39. Cf. Mt. 4:23.
[65] Mt. 12:9-14; Mk. 3:1-6; Lk. 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-5; Jn. 5:1-18.
[66] Mt. 15:21-28; Mk. 7:24-30.
[67] Lk. 17:11-19.
[68] Mt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25; Mt. 8:5-13; Lk. 7:1-10, *et al*.
[69] Mt. 17:14-21; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43.
[70] Mt. 10:1-15; Mk. 6:7-13; Lk. 9:1-6.
[71] Mk. 9:38-41; Lk. 9:49-50.
[72] This passage, Mk. 16:9-20, is not found in many of the best manuscripts, but some early sources allude to it. See the comments of Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 2nd ed. (London, 1966), p. 610.
[73] Mk. 16:17-18.
[74] See note 43.
[75] Lk. 13:16.
[76] BT Berachot 34[b].
[77] The text reads, *opheis arousin* (they will pick up snakes). A number of manuscripts precede "they will pick up snakes" with *kai en tais chersin* (and in the [i.e., their] hands).
[78] T Berachot 3:20; JT Berachot V, 9[a]; BT Berachot 33[a]; Tanhuma, *Va-Era* 4 (ed. Wilna, p. 187); Midrash Yelamdenu (ed. Mann, 1:98); Exodus Rabbah 3 (p. 135, in an abbreviated form).
[79] Lk. 10:19. Cf. Acts 28:3-6.
[80] M Terumot 8:4-6; T Terumot 7:12-17; JT Terumot VIII, 45[c]-46[a]; Avodah Zarah II, 41[a-b]; BT Bava Kamma 115[b]-116[a]; Hullin 49[b], *et al*.
[81] See Josephus, *Against Apion* 1:165, and S. Lieberman, *Ha-Yerushalmi Kifshuto* (Jerusalem, 1935), p. 49. Shmuel Klein (*The Land of Galilee*, 2nd ed. [Jerusalem, 1967], p. 140 [Hebrew]) states that the prohibition against the drinking of uncovered beverages was unknown in Galilee and was introduced there only after the destruction of the Temple; however, this is a mistake. See the comments of H. Albeck in his notes on M Terumot in *Shishah Sidrei Mishnah: Zera'im* [The Six Orders of the Mishnah: *Zera'im*] (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 1957), p. 390.
[82] See the references to JT Terumot and Avodah Zarah cited in note 80.
[83] The Hebrew is מגלגל (*megalgel*), which in this context means "to ridicule," and is the equivalent of מלגלג (*melagleg*). The reading מגלגל appears in Ms. Leiden and in Ms. Vatican 133, and גלגו, a related form, appears in Leviticus Rabbah 26:2 (ed. Margulies, p. 593). See *Aruch Completum* 2:288, s.v. גלגל.
[84] Cf. Lk. 10:19.
[85] *Against Apion* 1:60.
[86] Avot de-Rabbi Natan, Version A, Chpt. 6 (ed. Schechter, pp. 30-31); Version B, Chpt. 13 (pp. 30-32); Genesis Rabbah 42 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, pp. 397-398); Tanhuma, *Lech Lecha* 10 (ed. Buber, pp. 67-68); Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer 1-2.

[87] BT Yoma 35^{b}. In works originating in the land of Israel, there is no hint that Hillel was once poor. These sources witness that Hillel was the son of an aristocratic family, that he immigrated from Babylonia, and that he gave large contributions to the poor.
[88] BT Temurah 16^{a}; Exodus Rabbah 31.
[89] BT Yoma 35^{b}, Tanhuma, *Mishpatim* 9.
[90] BT Yoma 35^{b}; Kiddushin 49^{b}; JT Ta'anit IV, 69^{a}.
[91] BT Berachot 18^{a}; Shabbat 54^{a}; Kiddushin 49^{b}.
[92] JT Shevi'it IV, 35^{b}, *et al*.
[93] JT Berachot IV, 7^{d}; BT Berachot 28^{a}; Horayot 10^{a}.
[94] See JT Peah VIII, 20^{d}, *et al*.
[95] T Sotah 7:12, and the parallels in both Talmuds.
[96] BT Eruvin 86^{a}.
[97] JT Peah I, 15^{b}; BT Ketubot 50^{a}; 67^{b}; Arachin 28^{a}.
[98] See the sources cited in the preceding note. In the Jerusalem Talmud it was Rabban Gamaliel who sent for the sage, while in the Babylonian Talmud it was Rabbi Akiva. The problem with viewing Rabbi Yesheveav as a Hasid is that there are no Hasidic *halachot* in rabbinic sources, none given by anonymous Hasidim, and none by Hasidim who are named. There are, however, halachic traditions preserved in the name of Rabbi Yesheveav. See M Hullin 2:4; BT Yevamot 49^{a}, and parallels.
[99] Rabbi Yesheveav appears in all versions of the list of the ten martyrs. See Lamentations Rabbah 2 (ed. Buber, p. 100), *et al*.
[100] Apparently, the name of this sage has been lost.
[101] Song of Songs Rabbah (ed. Greenhut, p. 7^{a}).
[102] This tension can be seen in the saying of Hillel: "The ignorant man cannot be a fearer of sin, and the *am ha-aretz* [see note 16] cannot be a Hasid" (Avot 2:5). Hillel is reacting to the teaching of the Hasidim that deeds are more important than study. One should not think, Hillel says, that one can be a true Hasid without having a thorough knowledge of Torah. See Safrai, "Hasidim and Men of Deeds," 152-154.
[103] This ("and found none better for Israel than poverty") is the reading of Ms. Munich and other major textual traditions. Ms. Vatican 134 should be added to the list of sources mentioned in Dikduke Soferim, *ad loc*.
[104] See Safrai, "Hasidim and Men of Deeds," 150-151.
[105] BT Ketubot 106^{a}. See the responsa of the Gaon in S. Assaf, *The Responsa of the Geonim in the Genizah* (Jerusalem, 1929), p. 176 (Hebrew), and Assaf's comments in the Introduction, p. 153. There is absolutely no justification for the claim that rabbinic sources occasionally cite from an original or earlier Seder Eliyahu. The few differences between the work itself as it now stands and rabbinic citations of the work do not necessitate the creation of a new work.
[106] See the comments of H. Albeck in his Hebrew translation (titled, *The Sermons of Israel* [Jerusalem, 1947], pp. 55-57 [Hebrew]) of Leopold Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vortraege der Juden historisch entwickelt*.
[107] Seder Eliyahu Rabbah 18 (p. 97); Seder Eliyahu Zuta 15 (p. 199).
[108] Genesis Rabbah 71 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, pp. 834-835).
[109] Seder Eliyahu Rabbah 17 (pp. 86-88): "In the days of Joshua son of Nun…. In the days of the prophet Samuel…. In the days of the prophet Elijah…. In the days of Hezekiah king of Judah…." See also Seder Eliyahu Zuta 15 (p. 197).
[110] Seder Eliyahu Zuta 5 (p. 181).
[111] See the Introduction in M. Friedmann's edition of Seder Eliyahu, pp. 44–59.
[112] Seder Eliyahu Zuta 3 (p. 176).
[113] Safrai, "Hasidim and Men of Deeds," 149–150.
[114] In light of the discussion in the Jerusalem Talmud pertaining to the identification of the site (Megillah I, 70^{a}), Umi is Yama or Javneel (Josh. 19:33) in the tribal allotment of Naphtali. See Klein, *The Land of Galilee*, pp. 114, 146; Michael Avi-Yonah, *Historical Geography of Palestine* (Jerusalem, 1962), p. 139 (Hebrew); *Sefer Ha-Yishuv*, ed. Shmuel Klein (Jerusalem, 1939), pp. 91–93 (Hebrew).
[115] JT Ta'anit III, 64$^{a–c}$; BT Ta'anit 23$^{a–b}$.
[116] The Hasid did not need the *tallith* to cover his head while praying as is the custom today. Rather, the *tallith*, one's outer garment, was needed to go out in public. In the first century, it was considered immodest to appear in public without being dressed in a *tallith*.
[117] BT Ta'anit 25^{a}.
[118] Also according to the explanation in Matnot Kehunah, *ad loc*.
[119] A unit of liquid and dry measure equal to the space occupied by the contents of 24 eggs.
[120] BT Berachot 17^{b}; Ta'anit 24^{b}; Hullin 86^{a}.
[121] The Hasidim were especially strict regarding the Sabbath laws. See BT Shabbat 19^{a}; Shabbat 121^{b}; JT Shabbat I, 4^{a}; IX, 15^{a}; Leviticus Rabbah 34 (ed. Margulies, p. 815), *et al*.
[122] Avot de-Rabbi Natan, Version A, Chpt. 6 (ed. Schechter, p. 29); Version B, Chpt. 12 (p. 30).
[123] BT Yoma 35^{b}. Works composed in the land of Israel contain no references to Hillel's supposed beginnings as a poor laborer.
[124] Leviticus Rabbah 13 (ed. Margulies, p. 281); 35 (p. 824); Pesikta de-Rav Kahana 14 (ed. Mandelbaum, pp. 241-242). According to one source from outside the land, this saying was uttered by Rabbi Aha. In BT Hagigah 9^{b}, it is a folk saying ("as people say").
[125] David Flusser and Shmuel Safrai, "The Slave of Two Masters," *Immanuel* 6 (1976), 30–33, and

reprinted in Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 169–172.
[126] See notes 97 and 98.
[127] Especially if we include in our discussion the sixth chapter of Avot, known as *Kinyan Torah* (The Acquisition of Torah). This chapter is certainly not part of the original tractate; however, it can serve to illustrate the importance that the study of Torah had for the sages.
[128] On the desire of the sages to establish a balance between "study" and "deed," see Sifre Deuteronomy 41 (ed. Finkelstein, pp. 85–86), and the parallels in the Talmuds and midrashim. Cf. the statement of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai in Avot de-Rabbi Natan, Version A, Chpt. 22 (ed. Schechter, pp. 74–75), *et al*. See also Safrai, "Hasidim and Men of Deeds," 144–147.
[129] In a baraita of the Hasid Rabbi Pinhas ben Yair, which lists the qualities of character that one should seek, Rabbi Pinhas concludes that the supreme quality is *Hasidut* (saintliness). See JT Shekalim III, 47^{c} (and parallels); BT Avodah Zarah 20^{a}. The study of Torah is not mentioned and was added only in printed editions of the Babylonian Talmud. See Safrai, "Hasidim and Men of Deeds," 148.
[130] M Peah 1:1 lists those commandments "whose interest one enjoys in this world, and whose principal remains for him in the world to come." The saying's conclusion is: "But the study of Torah is equal to them all." Seder Eliyahu Zuta, which reflects the spirit and teaching of the Hasidim, preserves this saying in similar language and form, but omits its conclusion on the importance of study. (See Chpt. 2, p. 172.)
[131] See Avot de-Rabbi Natan, Version B, Chpt. 27 (ed. Schechter, p. 55).
[132] JT Terumot VIII, 46^{b}.
[133] M Ta'anit 3:8, and similarly, T Ta'anit 3:1.
[134] JT Berachot V, 9^{d}; BT Berachot 34^{b}.
[135] M Avot 3:9–10.
[136] The sayings can be found in B. Z. Bacher, *Aggadot of the Tannaim* (Tel Aviv, 1928), II, 2, pp. 158–161 (Hebrew).